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SUBJECT: JAPANESE MORNING PRESS HIGHLIGHTS 04/21/08

Index:

- 1) Top headlines
- 2) Editorials
- 3) Prime Minister's weekend and daily schedules (Nikkei)

DPRK problem:

- 4) Ambassador Schieffer meets Prime Minister Fukuda over delisting (Mainichi)
- 5) North Korea tells U.S. last year about its plutonium use: "18 kg for nuclear development, 6 kg for testing" (Tokyo Shimbun)

Japan-ROK summitry:

- 6) Japan-ROK summit today in Tokyo (Asahi)
- 7) Prime Minister Fukuda, ROK President Lee to meet today; Tokyo remains cautious about Imperial visit to ROK (Sankei)
- 8) Japan, ROK leaders to meet today, eye stepping up U.S.-Japan-ROK dialogue (Nikkei)

Fukuda diplomacy:

- 9) Japan-China-ROK summit also likely to take place this fall (Nikkei)
- 10) Prime Minister Fukuda plans to meet Russian leaders for 1st time (Tokyo Shimbun)

Opinion polls:

- 11) Fukuda cabinet's support rate sags to 25 PERCENT in Asahi poll (Asahi)
- 12) Fukuda cabinet's approval rating drops to 29 PERCENT in Nikkei

poll (Nikkei)
13) Fukuda cabinet's support rate spirals down to 27.6 PERCENT in Jiji Press poll (Tokyo Shimbun)
14) Yomiuri poll: 60 PERCENT opposed to lowering legal age of adulthood from 20 to 18 (Yomiuri)

Yamaguchi by-election:
15) DPJ candidate leading LDP ticket in Asahi analysis (Asahi)
16) Mainichi analysis also finds DPJ candidate in 'pole position' over LDP ticket (Mainichi)

Economic issues:
17) USTR calls on Japan to reopen beef markets (Tokyo Shimbun)
18) BOJ to hold rates steady (Asahi)

Defense & security issues:
19) Japan to renew defense program (Yomiuri)
20) Prime Minister Fukuda vows Iwakuni base's dual use (Nikkei)
21) LDP panel works out draft plan for Defense Ministry reorganization involving SDF (Yomiuri)
22) Foreign Minister Koumura implies Japan's possible nonconcurrence on cluster bomb ban treaty (Tokyo Shimbun)
23) ASDF fighter jets make more than 300 scrambles last year (Yomiuri)

Articles:

1) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:
Poll: Fukuda cabinet support rate plunges to 25 PERCENT ; 71 PERCENT unhappy with new medical system for the elderly

TOKYO 00001082 002 OF 012

Mainichi:
Poll: DPJ candidate Hiraoka leads in Lower House by-election in Yamaguchi No.2 constituency

Yomiuri:
Graffiti found in 7 places at Zenkoji Temple in Nagano

Nikkei:
Poll: Fukuda cabinet approval rate drops to 29 PERCENT , 49 PERCENT would support revival of provisional gasoline tax rate

Sankei:
36 prefectures urge government to revive provisional tax rates

Tokyo Shimbun:
North Korea claims it used 18 kilograms of plutonium for nuclear weapons development, 6 kilograms for nuclear test in 2006

Akahata:
Japanese Communist Party holds agricultural revitalization symposium in Akita Prefecture

2) EDITORIALS

Asahi:
(1) Metabolic medical checkup: We should get rid of our "spare tires" through our own efforts
(2) Subsidies for academic programs: Social generosity urged

Mainichi:
(1) Zero-waste government: Administrative abdication of roles unallowable
(2) Two years since Japan Judicial Support Center established: Center should not forget principle of reform

Yomiuri:
(1) Political effort needed for decentralization
(2) Food shortage is not someone else's problem

Nikkei:
(1) International cooperation urgently needed to deal with serious

food crisis

Sankei:

(1) Employment of once punished SIA staff: Reform efforts meaningless

(2) New flu: Need for early doses of vaccines for as many people as possible

Tokyo Shimbun:

(1) More specifics needed for draft reform of Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport

(2) Olympic torch relay: China should avoid staining Olympic history

Akahata:

(1) Fifth largest ODA donor: Japan needs policy giving top priority to poverty alleviation

3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, April 18

TOKYO 00001082 003 OF 012

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

April 19, 2008

09:01

Cabinet meeting in the Diet. State Minister for Administrative Reform Watanabe remained.

09:26

Met with Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Futahashi at the Kantei.

10:07

Met with Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka, followed by Asian and Oceanian Affairs Bureau Director General Saiki and Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Ando.

11:15

Met with former Secretary General Nakagawa, followed by Otsuji, head of the LDP caucus in the Upper House.

14:11

Met with Upper House member Hirofumi Nakasone. Then met with representatives of six regional organizations, including Fukuoka Prefectural Governor Aso, chairman of the Association of Prefectural Governors.

15:05

Met with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, followed by U.S. Ambassador to Japan Schieffer.

16:28

Met with Public Security Intelligence Agency Director General Yanagi. Then met with Ambassador to South Korea Shigeie, Deputy Vice Foreign Ministers Sasae, Saiki and Finance Ministry Customs and Tariff Bureau Director General Aoyama.

17:32

Cabinet meeting related to monthly economic report

19:04

Dined with New Komeito female lawmakers, including Deputy head Hamayotsu, at a French restaurant at Tokyo Kaikan. New Komeito President Ota was present.

20:46

Arrived at the official residence.

Prime Minister's schedule, April 19

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

April 20, 2008

10:05

Met with Sasae, Saiki, European Affairs Bureau Director General Harada and Ando.

14:06

Arrived at the official residence.

Prime Minister's schedule, April 20

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)

TOKYO 00001082 004 OF 012

April 21, 2008

08:04

Arrived at Haneda Airport.

08:29

Left Haneda Airport by All Nippon Airways Flight 673.

09:25

Met with LDP Public Relations Chief Kawamura at Hiroshima Airport.

10:50

Campaign speech for a candidate for Yamaguchi No. 2 Constituency by-election along with New Komeito President Ota in front of JR Iwakuni Station.

11:26

Met with Vice Yamaguchi Prefectural Governor Nishimura and Iwakuni City Mayor Fukuda at Iwakuni International Tourism Hotel in Iwakuni City, Yamaguchi Prefecture.

12:20

Campaign speech at a parking area of construction material sales company Phanos in Hikari City along with Ota.

13:13

Campaign speech along with Ota in front of Kudamatsu Town center, in Kudamatsu City.

14:01

Met with Vice Election Committee Chairman Suga at JR Tokuyama Station.

14:16

Left Tokuyama Station by Bullet Train Hikari 465.

15:05

Arrived at JR Hakata Station.

15:18

Met with Fukuoka Chapter Chairman Matsuhiko Shingu at Fukuoka Airport.

15:58

Left Fukuoka Airport by ANA 258.

17:19

Arrived at Haneda Airport.

18:11

Met with State Minister for Consumer Affairs Kishida and Consumer Administration Promotion Conference Chairman Sasaki at Grand Prince Hotel Akasaka.

20:12

Arrived at the official residence.

4) Prime Minister Fukuda meets with U.S. Ambassador to Japan Schieffer over question of delisting DPRK as state sponsor of terrorism

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)

TOKYO 00001082 005 OF 012

April 19, 2008

Takashi Sudo

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda on April 18 met with U.S. Ambassador to Japan J. Thomas Schieffer at the Prime Minister's Official Residence. After the session, Ambassador Schieffer was asked by reporters whether the U.S. will remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism, but he avoided making clear what he discussed, simply saying, "I discussed the six-party talks with the prime minister, but I would like to refrain from going into detail."

The Ambassador apparently gave an account to the prime minister about Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's remarks made on April 17, in which she said it will be possible to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism even before the verification process for North Korea's declaration of its nuclear programs is completed. The Ambassador also said: "I conveyed to the prime minister that the United States would like to maintain bilateral cooperation with Japan in the six-party talks." The Ambassador apparently took into consideration Japan's concerns about delisting North Korea.

On April 18, the prime minister told reporters: "I asked about how U.S.-North Korea talks are going. The six-party talks will be resumed sooner or later."

5) North Korea told U.S. last year that it used 18 kilograms of plutonium for nuclear development and 6 kilograms for nuclear test

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Top play) (Excerpts)
April 21, 2008

North Korea explained to the United States last December that it had used approximately 18 kilograms of plutonium for nuclear development and 6 kilograms for its underground nuclear test conducted in October 2006, a six-party talks source revealed yesterday.

It has already become clear that the North declared to the United States that it had produced approximately 30 kilograms of plutonium in total. Given the disparity with its initial estimate, the United States seems to have asked (the North) for verifiable data.

According to the six-party source, North Korean Vice-Foreign Minister Kim Kye Gwan in early December told visiting U.S. top nuclear negotiator and Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill that the North had produced about 30 kilograms of plutonium and that it used 18 kilograms of it for nuclear development and 6 kilograms for the nuclear test.

6) Japan-ROK summit today

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)
April 21, 2008

South Korean President Lee Myung Bak arrived in Tokyo last evening for the first time since taking office. On arriving at Haneda Airport, the president held a ceremony in which about 400 South Korean people residing in Japan took part. Speaking in it of the issue of permanent foreign residents' calls for the Japanese government to give them the right to vote in local elections, Lee took a positive stance of supporting their request. He also revealed

TOKYO 00001082 006 OF 012

that he would call on Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to increase capital investment in South Korea during their summit slated for today. As to the history issue, he said: "We cannot forget the past, but we cannot move forward on past history alone."

Lee and U.S. President George W. Bush agreed to urge North Korea to abandon its nuclear programs. Accordingly, Lee will also discuss with Fukuda policy toward North Korea in today's meeting. He is expected to declare the formation of a framework for trilateral dialogue between Tokyo, Seoul, and Washington on various issues, including security.

Lee wants to expand Japan's investment in his country, repairing the bilateral relations strained in the former government of President Rho Moo Hyun. He will also likely declare a resumption of the talks on an economic partnership agreement (EPA) between Tokyo and Seoul.

7) Japanese, South Korean leaders to meet today, but time not ripe for South Korea visit by Emperor

SANKEI (Page 2) (Lead Paragraph)
April 21, 2008

(Katsuhiro Kuroda, Seoul)

South Korean President Lee Myung Bak arrived in Tokyo yesterday. He will meet with the Emperor and Empress at the Imperial Palace this afternoon after meeting Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda. Lee is expected to invite the Emperor to visit South Korea out of courtesy, but there are a host of hurdles to clear before the visit is realized. It is uncertain that even the Lee administration will be able to bring about a visit to South Korea by the Emperor.

8) Japan, U.S., South Korea to strengthen talks on North Korea: Resumption of EPA talks also to take center-stage at Japan-South Korea summit today

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 21, 2008

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda will hold a summit with South Korean President Lee Myung Bak at the Kantei today. The two leaders are expected to reach an agreement to strengthen dialogue among Japan, the U.S. and South Korea with the aim of urging North Korea to abandon its nuclear program. They will also reaffirm a policy of speeding up work to prepare for a resumption of bilateral Economic Partnership Agreement talks. As part of efforts to strengthen ties between Japan and South Korea, both leaders will come up with a policy of increasing the number of South Koreans visiting Japan, based on a working holiday system. President Lee came to Japan yesterday. His Japan visit is part of reciprocal visits decided on during their previous summit held in South Korea in February.

The launch of the new South Korean administration, which takes a hard-line position toward Pyongyang, has paved the way for holding a dialogue among Japan, the U.S. and South Korea. They want to establish frameworks for cabinet-level and vice-ministerial-level talks in a wide range of areas, including security, the environment and the economy, as well as North Korea's nuclear development.

The focus of the EPA talks between Tokyo and Seoul will be on

TOKYO 00001082 007 OF 012

whether it is possible to fix a time to start bureau-director-level preliminary talks as agreed on at the previous summit. Since South Korea is concerned that its trade deficit with Japan will increase as a result of market liberalization, it is unclear whether the summit today can pave the way for resuming the suspended talks.

Fukuda and Lee are expected to agree to hold trilateral talks with China as early as this fall in Japan. The idea is for the three countries to hold a summit in rotation in a framework separate from the one held on the sidelines of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) meetings.

9) Japan, China, South Korea to hold summit possibly in fall to deal with security, other issues in concert: Framework for Japan-U.S.-South Korea talks

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 20, 2008

The government will strengthen dialogues among Japan, China and South Korea, and Japan, the U.S. and South Korea. Regarding a Japan-China-ROK framework, coordination is now underway to hold a first regular summit among the three countries as early as this

fall. The aim is to deal with broad-based issues, such as security, the environment and the economy, in concert.

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda at a study meeting on diplomatic policy held on April 18-19 confirmed those policies. He plans to make his proposal at a Japan-South Korea summit with President Lee Myung Bak to be held on April 21 and a Japan-China summit with Chinese President Hu Jintao slated for May 7 and is expected to reach a basic agreement with the two leaders.

A Japan- China-ROK summit has been held on the sidelines of ASEAN meetings annually since 1999, except for 2005. At the summit held in Singapore last November, the three countries agreed in principle to hold a summit in rotation, separately from summits held on the sidelines of international conferences. An agreement will be reached this time that Japan should host such a summit in the fall.

Japan, the U.S. and South Korea had discussed measures to deal with the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear program, holding bureau-director-level talks at the Trilateral Coordination and Oversight Group (TCOG) from 1999 through 2003. However, the meeting was suspended due to South Korea's previous Roh Moo Hyun administration's conciliatory policy toward Pyongyang. The government views that the inauguration of the Lee Myung Bak administration, which has a hard-line stance toward North Korea, has paved the way for creating a framework for talks among the three countries.

10) Prime Minister Fukuda to meet with Russian leaders on April 26 for first time

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Full)
April 21 2008

Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda will make a three-day trip to Russia April 25-27. He is expected to meet on the 26th for the first time with President Vladimir Putin and President-elect Dmitry Medvedev.

The aim of Fukuda's visit to Moscow is to hold face-to-face meetings

TOKYO 00001082 008 OF 012

with the Russian leaders ahead of the Group of Eight (G-8) summit that Fukuda will chair in July in Hokkaido. In his meetings with Putin and Medvedev, Fukuda intends to get their cooperation for a new international framework to deal with global warming, which will be a main topic of discussion at the upcoming G-8 summit.

Fukuda will work on the two Russian leaders to accelerate the stalled negotiations on the Northern Territories, but concrete improvement on the issue is unlikely.

11) Poll: Cabinet support plummets to 25 PERCENT

ASAHI (Top play) (Abridged)
April 21, 2008

The Asahi Shimbun conducted a telephone-based public opinion survey across the nation on Apr. 19-20, in which the rate of public support for Prime Minister Fukuda's cabinet hit its all-time low of 25 PERCENT (in the Asahi poll series), markedly lower than the 31 PERCENT rating in the last survey conducted Mar. 29-30. Meanwhile, the nonsupport rate for the Fukuda cabinet was 60 PERCENT (53 PERCENT in the last survey). Cabinet support last fell below 30 PERCENT when Prime Minister Abe was in office. The Abe cabinet's support rate hit its all-time low of 26 PERCENT in a survey conducted right after the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's rout in the July 2007 election for the House of Councillors.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the LDP was substantially down from 31 PERCENT to 26 PERCENT. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) was at 22 PERCENT (20 PERCENT in the last survey).

12) Poll: Cabinet support rate drops to 29 PERCENT

NIKKEI (Top play) (Abridged)

April 21, 2008

The approval rating for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and his cabinet dropped 2 percentage points from March to 29 PERCENT , the lowest ever (in the Nikkei poll series) since his cabinet's inauguration, in a public opinion survey conducted by the Nihon Keizai Shimbun on Apr. 18-20. The disapproval rating also rose 5 points to 59 PERCENT , reaching a new high. In the survey, a total of 49 PERCENT were in favor of restoring the now-expired rate of provisional taxation on gasoline to use gas tax revenues for general purposes or continue road construction and other road-related infrastructure projects, with a total of 42 PERCENT saying the provisional gas taxation should be abolished.

In the breakdown of public support for political parties, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party stood at 38 PERCENT , down 2 points from the last survey. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) also dropped 1 point to 29 PERCENT .

The survey was taken by Nikkei Research Inc. over the telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,541 households with one or more eligible voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 908 persons (58.9 PERCENT).

13) Poll: Fukuda cabinet's support rate dips to 27.6 PERCENT

TOKYO 00001082 009 OF 012

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged)
April 19, 2008

According to a Jiji Press opinion poll conducted Apr. 11-14, the rate of public support for Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's cabinet was 27.6 PERCENT , down 3.3 percentage points from last month. The Fukuda cabinet's support rate has yet to stop declining and fell below 30 PERCENT for the first time since its inauguration in September last year. Meanwhile, the nonsupport rate rose 4.7 points to 52.4 PERCENT .

In the breakdown of public support for the Fukuda cabinet, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party stood at 22.9 PERCENT , up 1.1 points from last month. The leading opposition Democratic Party of Japan (Minshuto) was at 13.1 PERCENT , up 0.5 point. The DPJ's approval rating dropped for the fifth month in a row. New Komeito, the LDP's coalition partner, was at 2.6 PERCENT , down 1.3 points. The proportion of those with no particular party affiliation was 56.9 PERCENT , up 0.4 point.

The survey was conducted across the nation with 2,000 persons chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over. The retrieval rate was 66.5 PERCENT .

14) Poll: 60 PERCENT opposed to lowering age of majority

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Abridged)
April 20, 2008

According to a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey conducted Apr. 12-13 by the Yomiuri Shimbun, 59 PERCENT of respondents said they were against lowering the legal age of adulthood, stipulated by the Civil Code, to 18 years old from 20, while 36 PERCENT supported the possible legal change. The Legislative Council, an advisory panel for the justice minister, has been studying the idea. In the survey this time, however, cautious opinions outnumbered affirmative ones.

15) Poll: DPJ candidate slightly ahead in Yamaguchi

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
April 21, 2008

The candidate from the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) is slightly ahead in the by-election on April 27 for a House of Representatives seat in Yamaguchi No. 2 District. According to analysis based on a

telephone survey by Asahi Shimbun on April 19-20 and information collected by reporters, former DPJ Lower House member Hideo Hiraoka - endorsed by the Social Democratic Party - leads Shigetaro Yamamoto, the Liberal Democratic Party's candidate, who has been endorsed by New Komeito. But Yamamoto is fast closing the gap. About 30 PERCENT of eligible voters remain undecided, so the tide may turn at any moment in the last phase of the election campaign.

16) By-election campaigning for Lower House seat in Yamaguchi 2nd District: DPJ-backed Hiraoka leads LDP rival

MAINICHI (Top play) (Lead paragraph)
April 21, 2008

The Mainichi Shimbun and the TV Yamaguchi Broadcasting Systems

TOKYO 00001082 010 OF 012

conducted an opinion survey on April 19-20 about the ongoing by-election campaigning for a Lower House seat in Yamaguchi 2nd District. The election is on April 27. The findings show that candidate Hideo Hiraoka (54), former House of Representatives member of the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) elected in proportional representation, is leading his rival Shigetaro Yamamoto (59), a new face backed by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) who formerly served as director of the Cabinet Secretariat's Office for Revitalization of Local Regions. At this point in time, however, some 30 PERCENT of the electorate remains undecided, so the situation is fluid.

17) USTR urges Japan to follow South Korea on conditions for U.S. beef imports

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
Evening April 19, 2008

(Masakazu Furukawa, Washington)

In a recent U.S.-South Korea summit, South Korea agreed to ease its requirements for U.S. beef imports. Following this development, U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Susan Schwab issued a statement on April 19 noting: "We want Japan, Taiwan, and China to fall in line with South Korea," urging the three to review their import conditions.

Washington is dissatisfied with Japan's limit on U.S. beef to cattle 20 months or younger. Until the first case of BSE was reported in the U.S., Japan was the largest destination for its beef exports. Pressure on Japan is expected to intensify further in the run-up to the presidential election and congressional election in November.

In the statement, Schwab pointed out that when commodity prices are rising internationally, "safe, reasonably priced, and high-quality U.S. beef will soon be back on South Korean dinner tables" under the agreement. She strongly urged Japan and the other two economies to also review their import conditions, noting: "We want them to give consideration to consumers' benefits."

18) BOJ to change current policy of aiming at raising interest rates

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpt)
April 21, 2008

The Bank of Japan (BOJ) has so far aimed at raising interest rates, but it will make a policy switch in a report titled "The outlook for economic and price situations" to be finalized in a monetary policymaking meeting on April 30. This decision reflects the dominant view in the central bank that it will be difficult for the time being to raise interest rates, because many companies have seen their business performance deteriorating due to recent higher prices of raw materials and other goods.

19) National Defense Program Guidelines to be fundamentally revised in fiscal 2009 to deal with China's rise

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
April 20, 2008

The government informally decided yesterday to fundamentally revise the National Defense Program Guidelines (NDPG), the basic guidelines

TOKYO 00001082 011 OF 012

for the nation's defense policy, for the first time in five years. Given the possibility that China's rapid military buildup might pose a threat to Japan's security in the future, the government has decided to come up with a revised NDPG that specifies a plan to build up the nation's defense capabilities to deal with China's military expansion with an eye to the next 10 years. The government envisages the renewed NDPG also reflecting reform of the Defense Ministry, which has been hit by a series of scandals. Setting up an experts' council, the government eyes a cabinet decision in late next year.

The NDPG analyzes the international military situation, spells out basic guidelines for the nation's defense policies and defines the standard of its defense capabilities. The guidelines have been revised in accordance with changes to the international situation. It was first compiled in 1976 during the Cold War. It was revised in 1995 after the end of the Cold War, and again in 2004, when the issues of ballistic missiles and terrorist threats became pressing challenges.

China's rapid military buildup and other factors have prompted the Japanese government to fundamentally revise the NDPG instead of its initial plan of making minor changes to the 2004 guidelines.

China has been proactively deploying state-of-the-art fighters, submarines, and ballistic missiles. The pace of the Chinese military buildup has been far beyond Japan's initial forecast. In compiling a new program, ways to enhance the Self-Defense Forces' antisubmarine capabilities and the missile defense system are likely to be major challenges.

20) Prime Minister Fukuda promises to realize joint use of Iwakuni base

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
April 21, 2008

In a meeting yesterday at a hotel in Yamaguchi Prefecture's Iwakuni City with Vice Governor Wataru Yamaguchi and Iwakuni Mayor Yoshihiko Fukuda, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda touched on the question of resuming the joint use of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni and indicated his intention to deal with the matter positively, telling them: "Doing so is necessary to develop this region. I promise I will do so."

21) LDP panel's MOD reform plan calls for uniformed officers to lead unit management

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged slightly)
February 21, 2008

The Liberal Democratic Party's panel on reform of the Ministry of Defense (MOD), chaired by Yasukazu Hamada, yesterday unveiled a set of draft proposals. The plan is designed to integrate the Self-Defense Forces' management functions into the Joint Staff (JS) to shift weight from civilians in the internal bureaus to uniformed SDF officers. The panel did not include in its proposals Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba's plan to integrate and reorganize the internal bureaus and the staff offices of the three forces in view of cautious opinions among defense policy specialists who regard Ishiba's plan as too radical.

TOKYO 00001082 012 OF 012

The proposals call for abolition of the operation and planning bureau, an internal bureau, and setting up a joint command in the JS in order to allow uniformed officers with expertise to exclusively handle operations. At the same time, in order to avoid excess concentration of power, the plan also calls for revising the JS into

an organ composed of both uniformed and civilian officers. The plan is chiefly modeled after Britain's approach.

22) Foreign Minister Koumura implies opposition to treaty banning cluster bombs with absence of U.S., Russia

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 3) (Excerpts)
April 19, 2008

At a Lower House Foreign Affairs Committee session on April 18, Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura referred to the "Oslo process" joined by more than 100 countries with the aim of concluding by the end of the year a treaty prohibiting cluster bombs, noting: "Without the participation of such major munitions-producing or munitions-holding countries as (the United States and Russia), the treaty will be of less significance."

Koumura's remarks are taken to mean that even if the treaty banning cluster bombs is adopted at an international conference in Dublin slated for May, Japan will not endorse the treaty without the participation of the U.S., Russia, and other major countries.

23) ASDF fighter jets make over 300 scrambles last year

YOMIURI (Page 33) (Full)
April 19, 2008

The Air Self-Defense Force made a total of 307 scrambles in fiscal 2007 against foreign aircraft that could have violated Japan's territorial airspace, according to statistics compiled by the Defense Ministry Joint Staff Office. The annual frequency of scrambles topped 300 for the first time in 14 years. More than 80 PERCENT of those scrambles were against Russian planes. In its analysis, the Defense Ministry says Russia has increased its defense spending in line with its economic recovery and stepped up its air force's flight training and intelligence-gathering activities near Japan.

The 307 scrambles in fiscal 2007 are about a third to a half of the annual figure in the Cold War but showed an increase of 68 scrambles over the preceding fiscal year. In their breakdown, 253 scrambles were against Russian aircraft, followed by 43 against Chinese aircraft and 3 against Taiwanese aircraft. There were 57 more scrambles against Russian aircraft than in the preceding fiscal year.

SCHIEFFER